



THE ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPAL ELECTRICITY UNDERTAKINGS (SOUTHERN AFRICA)

WHAT IS THE AMEU ?

It is an association of municipal electricity distributors as well as national, parastatal, commercial, academic and other organisations that have a direct interest in the electricity supply industry in Southern Africa.

WHAT ARE ITS AIMS AND OBJECTIVES ?

The AMEU promotes quality of service and management excellence amongst its members in the field of electricity supply, and facilitates communication between its members and between members and the technical, economic and political environment, in order to influence that environment. In the interest of electricity distributors and all categories of end users in the electricity supply industry in Southern Africa it also provides an advisory service to its members and the customers of its members.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1915 a group of 22 electrical engineers from 17 towns and cities came together in Johannesburg to adopt a constitution for what they called the Association of Municipal Electrical Engineers (Union of South Africa). The first president was Dr. J H Dobson, City Electrical Engineer of Johannesburg. Within a few years membership had been changed to include “undertakings”, and the name was changed to the Association of Municipal Electricity Undertakings (Southern Africa), this included undertakings from Zimbabwe, Zambia and Namibia. The AMEU is unique in that municipal electrical engineers in charge of their respective undertakings, as well as their elected councilors have played active roles in its affairs ever since. Commercial organizations and private consulting engineering practices were soon involved and in 1958 membership was formally extended to include “affiliates” to regularize this relationship.

The 2005 membership included 148 undertakings and 131 affiliates, with engineer, associate and other grades of membership bringing the total to 718.

HOW DOES IT OPERATE ?

Day to day activities of the Association are taken care of by a full-time Secretariat under the guidance of a President and Executive Council whose members are elected every two years from the engineer representatives of the distributor members. The President is elected annually by the members of the Council. Specialist committees and subcommittees made up of members of the Council are dedicated to such matters as education and training, legal and statutory affairs,

finance, engineering, technical and product development and standardisation, publicity and such ad-hoc subjects as arise from time to time. In many cases they are assisted by associate members from member undertakings - who have a special interest or knowledge of a particular subject under review - on specialist committees of the South African Bureau of Standards and other statutory bodies such as the Electricity Suppliers Liason Committee.

ACTIVITIES

Members of the Association are grouped in five Branches and two Sub-branches throughout the RSA and meet on a regular basis to discuss matters of interest to members. The subjects cover all aspects of the technical, operational, managerial, legal and statutory topics that affect electricity supply at both local and national levels. In addition, members meet on an annual basis to consider and debate a variety of papers - selected to cover current relevant subjects - presented to delegates at conventions and technical meetings, and to receive reports on the work of technical and specialist committees in which members have served from time to time.

Representatives of the Association also participate in meetings of international organisations that have similar objectives to those of the AMEU, and in general foster the exchange of information in the field of electricity supply.

The Association charges a nominal membership fee to cover the costs of its many activities.

CONCILLORS

Participation by Councilors in Association affairs started with attendance at the 1924 Annual Convention. By 1935 they were playing an active role in all aspects of the Association's work and the constitution was formally amended to provide full voting rights. Their participation has remained at a high level ever since and their regular contributions to debates and policy formulation is a unique feature of the Association's activities at Council, Committee and Convention levels.

WHAT PART DO THE AFFILIATES PLAY?

Affiliate members of the Association are drawn from commercial and private sector organisations and operate a separate committee under an elected chairman. They liaise closely with the Secretariat and Executive Council at all times. In addition to attending branch and national meetings, they get together regularly to plan their participation and contributions to all AMEU activities. As networking and social interaction are significant parts of the AMEU's activities for the exchange of information the Affiliates play an important role in the facilitation of functions and meetings. Their attendance at branch and national meetings of the Association includes contributions to the general discussions during the proceedings, and the delivering of addresses on subjects or products, when appropriate in the program. At many regional and national meetings the affiliates organise exhibitions or demonstrations of equipment and products, and business contacts are established.

COMMUNICATING WITH ITS MEMBERS

All important decisions of the Executive Council are conveyed immediately to members in appropriate electronic or, when necessary, posted circular letters from the Secretariat. Also, representatives from each branch serve on the Executive Council and are required to attend

branch meetings to report directly on activities and decisions of the Council. In turn they report back to the Council on important matters debated by the branches that are likely to impact on all members of the Association, or influence policy decisions at a national level. Between meetings information is circulated via a monthly electronic bulletin that is directed to both members and participating industry players. The AMEU also maintains a website that is regularly updated and which includes all relevant information and reports. In addition, the Association publishes AMEU NEWS, a three times a year printed newsletter. This carries news and information on Association activities, policies, personalities and important projects being undertaken by individual members that are judged to be of interest to other members by virtue of their technical, conceptual, financial and/or managerial aspects. It also has news of new products and technical developments that have reached the market place and has a limited amount of direct advertising. It is circulated free of charge to all members and to a selection of other important readers having a direct interest in the industry. A further communication takes the form of a compilation of all the presented papers and reports from each annual meeting of the Association. These "Proceedings" are sent to all members and are also made available to interested outside parties at a small fee. The Proceedings also carry a limited amount of product and company advertising.

ACHIEVEMENTS

From its inception over 90 years ago the AMEU has been active in all aspects of the technical and statutory environment in which the electrical distribution industry operates. Its involvement in legislative affairs go back to the first Electricity Act of 1922 when its proposals ensured appropriate rights for municipal electricity undertakings. This was followed in 1926 when its efforts to obtain a national standard for voltage and frequency came to fruition. These seemingly innocuous events laid the foundation on which the whole of the national industry in South Africa has since been built. By 1939, thanks to the efforts of the AMEU, the first laws to regulate wiring and contracting to enhance the safe usage of electricity were in place. There followed a succession of activities that resulted in various statutes and codes of practice to further ensure good order and safety in the industry. The Association's ongoing inputs into the debate on restructuring of the national electricity distribution industry, on the formulation of policies concerning the provision of free basic electricity and its contribution to the many organizations and committees setting standards and codes of practice required to ensure an efficient and technically sound industry, are continuing. These endeavors will assist in securing a sound base for meeting the needs of all customers in electricity undertakings across the length and breadth of Southern Africa.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE SECRETARY ON TELEPHONE (011) 789-1384 OR CONSULT THE WEBSITE www.ameu.co.za
